

PEREGRINE

System Reference Document



A toolkit for creating
solo journaling games
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Introduction

Peregrine: traveler; a tendency to wander

Peregrine is a game system for card-based solo journaling games about wandering, traveling, and looking for a place of home and belonging. This toolkit helps you create your own games built on that framework. If you would like to read a game built on this system, there are free community copies available of my game Village Witch (<https://eliotsilvarian.itch.io/village-witch>), which Peregrine was built off of.

The Heart of the Game

Peregrine was created using the structure of the game Village Witch, a cozy narrative of a character traveling from village to village looking for the place where they will settle. Village Witch covers the first year of the character's life, separated into sections by season beginning with spring. Each season has a paragraph of description, several questions, then the direction to draw cards and craft your narrative using the associated prompts. Over the course of the year, the player gets to know their character more and what they're looking for, and either find a place to settle, or realize they're still searching for something. A core part of the game is the sense of searching for home, for a place of belonging, meeting people and finding yourself along the way.

This structure is what the Peregrine system is built on. Feel free to push the boundaries of what the game can be, whether through adding a twist on the meaning or by finding ways to add more players while still keeping to the heart of the game. If it feels to you like it's a Peregrine game, then it is.

Creating Your Game

Once you have a basic concept for your game, it's time to decide what you want to present to your players for game setup. How much information do you want to give them for character creation? Do you want to leave it open, ask a few questions, or provide full character sheets? How much detail do you want to give the settings? Village Witch includes a table for choosing a basic location, e.g., desert, forest, etc., as well as questions for the player to determine what sort of home the character resides in while there. Do you want to provide your players with preset locations or give them basic ideas and leave the details up to their imaginations? How often during the game do they go to new locations?

Next, choose how you want to break down the sections of time. By season? By month, by week, or even by day? Is there a certain amount of time you want to cover over the course of the game? Create pages for each section, and add description, narrative, and

questions as you determine what you want for each section. What sort of things happen each time? What makes each one different? How does the passage of time affect what is happening? What determines when the player moves on to the next section? In *Village Witch*, it is left up to the player to decide when they're done with the season, stop drawing cards, and move on, but in some games, there may be a set trigger, such as a certain number of cards pulled or other event.

How does your game come to an end? Does it end when the character reaches the end of a certain passage of time? What happens when they get to the end? Craft an epilogue where the player wraps up the narrative. What questions do you ask of them? Is there a definitive ending, or is it left open for

further gameplay? At the end of the journey, what questions or answers do you want them to have? How have they changed along the way?

Once you have the foundations of the game built, it's time to work on writing the prompts. You can use standard playing cards or tarot cards or have options for both. Tarot cards have a lot more cards than standard playing cards, including page cards as well as the Major Arcana. One way to work around this if you would like to include both is to use the page cards as wild cards, so the player isn't missing any extra prompts if they use a standard deck, and keep the Major Arcana as optional cards. Jokers can work as wild cards in a standard deck. Do you want to assign meaning to each card suit? In Village Witch, half of the suits are for prompts related to around the village and the other half are prompts

for around the home, then the Major Arcana are more personal, introspective questions, often somehow connected to the meaning of the cards in tarot. Write prompts for each card, which the player can then reference as they pull the cards to create their story throughout the game.

I would highly recommend a table of contents, as going back and forth from the game to the card prompts can be a lot of scrolling up and down. Also, consider accessibility where you can. Plain copies for ease of reading and screen readers are good, as well as for printing. Be careful of background images across a whole page or too little contrast between the text and background color, as those can make the text difficult to read, making a game unusable for some. An often overlooked accessibility option is making dyslexia-friendly files. The free font OpenDyslexic is good for this, as well as larger text and good spacing between things. Also take care to research

anything that might be a sensitive topic in games, such as issues of race, gender, disability, and things that affect other marginalized groups. Provide content warnings when needed for the comfort and safety of your players.

Licensing

Peregrine is a System Reference Document (SRD) for card-based solo journaling games. It is a toolkit with a framework to help you write your own games, which you may then distribute for free or for profit under the Creative Commons attribution license, as long as you give proper credit. You may not imply Eliot Silvarian is endorsing or sponsoring you unless specific arrangement has been made. If you use this document to help create your own game, please include the following text somewhere in the game's information:

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PEREGRINE

